

you know what is written here?" he asked the valet.

"No, *m'sieu*," came the whisper.

"Speak in Russian, Livanski. At last we have caught you. Vladimir Sassulitch is here!"

The wretched man fell like one dead. Two of the insurgents picked him up and carried him away without any protest from the escort. The Earl did not know what was happening; but Lord Carlingham interfered.

"That man is under our protection for the hour!" he cried vehemently. "Whatever his crimes, he should be fairly tried."

His words were unheeded. Ivan calmly was reading the letter again. He growled something, and the Cossack officer became visibly agitated.

"We are too late!" he cried in French. "The lady is married already."

"What new madness is this?" shouted Lord Carlingham, while his father, who understood French well enough to follow what was being said, caught his shoulder with trembling hands.

"It sounds like truth," replied the officer, who himself was startled out of his Muscovite phlegm. "This man tells me that the ceremony has taken place. Her ladyship is married to the Englishman who carried her off from the chapel of St. Stanislaus *Sapristi!* There's a rascal for you!"

#### CHAPTER XXIII.

### A Betrothal and a Respite

WHEN Frank Armstrong entered the rock-chamber in which Ermytrude awaited him he was even more disconcerted by her attitude than by Vladimir Sassulitch's blunt words. He expected to find her in a mood in which just anger blended with indignation. As a matter of fact, she was weeping.

Now, Ermytrude had not wept when Prince Boris led her to the chapel of St. Stanislaus. Then her youthful ladyship contemplated the ordeal of matrimony with a stoical indifference that betokened a fixed adherence to the principle that the end justifies the means. To-day she wept. Clearly there was a distinction between forced marriage with Prince Melnikoff in the one case and with Captain Armstrong in the other.

The sight of her distress was more than Frank could bear. He was at his wits' end for a method of escape from the extraordinary dilemma that faced him. It was impossible to contract such a union with the girl he loved, either with or without her consent, yet to infuriate men whose passions already were aroused to fever heat, and whose lives were in jeopardy, meant exposing Ermytrude to immeasurable danger.

He knew much that was hidden from her. The Muscovite, queer blend of East and West, can range in thought from Eastern contempt of women to excess of worship. Ivan Stephanovitch could bargain coolly for the nuptials of Natushka, as if she was a handsome slave destined by a critical purchaser for some seraglio in Stamboul, while Prince Boris would brave any peril, adopt any subterfuge or hidden device, to gain Ermytrude as a wife. Yet both men were Cossacks, differentiated somewhat by education, but capable alike of extremes in love and war.

It was essential that something should be done to allay the girl's agitation. Frank forced himself to say calmly:

"I must not pretend that I do not know the cause of your tears. Sassulitch has told me the proposal he dared to make to you. Ermytrude, you must endeavor not to yield to despair. Surely there must be a way out of the difficulty which faces us!"

There was no answer. She sat in the quaint, curved chair, forlornly picturesque in the midst of semi-barbaric surroundings, with her face hidden in her hands, and sobbing as if her heart was broken. He bent over her, tenderly caressing her hair as he might comfort a sorrowing child.

"Ermytrude," he said brokenly. "I will do all that man can to save you. Please try to control yourself. Perhaps

## HOW SCOTT GRABBED THE LIVE WIRE

By HOLMAN DAY



"IF you should dream," said Contractor Scott, "that you were crawling on your hands and knees, inside a circular wall, with all your earthly possessions on your back, trying to find a hole through the wall and yet knowing

well enough that you never could find one, and believing that you were doomed to fumble and butt away at the foot of that wall all your life—I say, if you should have such visions as that in the night it would come pretty near being a nightmare, wouldn't it?"

"Well, I had all the mental effect of that thing happen to me in real life. I certainly was up against it and with the consciousness that it was through no especial fault of my own, and also that no struggles of mine could change conditions. Ever and ever butting away at the wall and hunting for a hole to crawl through!"

"The end of it? Why, I climbed up that wall and over it on a live wire, astonishing myself all the time while I was doing it. And I guess some of the folks around me were astonished, too, at the way it all came out. Here's how it happened:

"I wasn't of the 'submerged tenth' class or a down-trodden serf or anything of that sort, you understand, but a chap pretty moderately comfortable, as the world looks at it. But I tell you, my friend, there isn't any real despair to equal that of the fairly intelligent chap of the middle classes with a family and ambitions, who has fallen into a rut of a job, and feels that he hasn't got the right technical education to suit his activities and aspirations.

"I had been a carpenter for ten years and at the end of the time I knew I had reached the limit of my earning capacity in that line, no matter how zealously I applied myself.

"When we 'sawdust lawyers' talked such things over, as we ate our noon dinners out of our pails, the fellows I worked with asserted that getting up somewhere in life all depended on how a chap started, for after he got to a certain age a man had sort of mortgaged himself to the future by what he knew how to do best—and so he was tied to the treadmill. You see, at that time I didn't have any idea that some one had planned out a way by which a chap could climb over the wall.

"I think I said as much to a stranger who called at my house one evening and stated that he represented some kind of an educational system taught by mail.

"I had never heard of the International Correspondence Schools or what the idea meant to a man in my position. But when he asked me whether I believed I had just the right kind of an education to fit in with my ambitions, why, that gave me a chance to launch out on my favorite topic. But the man proceeded to show me that not only had someone anticipated the growl that was coming from such as I, but had figured out a way around the difficulty. Why, when he found out that I had a hankering electricity-wards, he said I could become an electrical engineer, if I wanted to be one, and needn't lose a clip of work. I'll own up that at first crack it sounded as though he was assuring me that my rosiest dream would come to pass and I expected that I would believe him. But he kept at it and told me about other cases and in the end I decided to find out whether or not the 'sawdust lawyers' were mistaken.

"I wasn't very ambitious at the start. I began in the wiring and bell-work course. That's what I meant when I said I got over that wall by climbing on a live wire. It was a mighty interesting end of wire that came dangling toward me; it was just full of the tingling electricity of helpfulness. The moment I grabbed hold of it I felt awake all over. I want you to understand that there are some lively batteries attached to the business end of the I. C. S. wires. It's soggy material, indeed, that they can't put the thrill of accomplishment into.

"I studied nights and my spare hours and you can best judge of my encouragement and sense of self-reliance when I say that in a short time I gave up my carpenter work and started out in my new field. I got a job by simply mentioning that I was taking a course with the I. C. S. and showing my cards. The raises in pay I got, and they were pretty regular, I assure you—were all on account of my connection with the school and the progress I made in my studies.

"I went from \$9 a week as a helper to \$2.50 a day as an electrical foreman for the Brigham Electric Company. I felt that then I was at least half way up the wall! But that wire still thrilled in my clutch! That's the advantage of having hold of a good thing, you understand!

"So I enrolled for the electrical engineering course and, receiving the bound books, studied them by the assistance of the principles I had learned in the preceding course, and used them for reference books in my practical work. Then I was fairly on top of that wall! More thrill in the wire—more enthusiasm communicated by the knowing how and the knowledge that I did know how—and that those behind me knew how. I got tired of working for some one else. Yes, sir, I just jumped right square off that 'wage wall' and left it behind me—and if I talked to you an hour I couldn't better express my views of the I. C. S. course than by simply stating that I jumped. I had moral, mental and technical confidence in myself, and I've told you frankly how I got it. I trust that now you realize that a course of this training doesn't mean simply the accumulation of a lot of dry details and items of knowledge."



Mr. W. W. Scott, of 48 Armory St., Cambridgeport, Mass., whose experience is given above, is now an electrical contractor with an income of \$4000 a year. Thousands of others have attained success by the same means. You can do so if you will make the start. The I. C. S. can help you to qualify in your spare time for promotion or a more profitable occupation or to commence work at a better salary than if you started without training. They do this through their easy system of teaching by mail. The start is simply to fill in and mail to them the coupon below. They will tell you how they can fit you for the position you want, and they will send you their booklet, "1001 Stories of Success," telling what the I. C. S. has done for a thousand others beside Mr. Scott.

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we may be able to temporize with these men. Melnikoff may yield to their demands, and thus extricate you from an unhappy predicament. Your father is wealthy, and if no other resource presents itself I shall not scruple to bribe some of Ivan's followers to help you. For myself, I am prepared to encounter any risk for your sake."

But Ermytrude wept more than ever. "I am destined to bring misery on all who come in contact with me," she wailed. "My folly indeed has been punished. How you must despise me in your heart though indeed I do believe you will help me to the end."

The fluttering words which escaped her were not exactly those which Armstrong expected. He completely lost such shred of self-possession as remained. Despis Ermytrude? Listen to her tearful self condemnation? He might endure much but these things were insufferable.

He sank to his knees by her side, and placed his arms around her, deluding himself into the belief that a spoken declaration of his love might steel her into fortitude and show her the paramount need there was for action if both were to be saved from an intolerable predicament.

"Ermytrude, my dear one," he said, and his voice sounded in his ears as if he was speaking in a dream, "nothing on earth but the sight of your agony would unlock my lips. How can I harbor thoughts with which you credit me when I have loved you almost from the first happy hour I met you?"

She started convulsively, yet kept her face hidden. He bit his lips in his determination not to spare himself. When she realized his plight, surely she would strive to assist in devising some means of rescue.

"I know too well," he went on, "that my love is hopeless. If, in other days, I weakly permitted myself the delight of seeing and speaking to you, I had at least the requisite strength of mind to leave you with my poor secret hidden in my heart."

Somehow Ermytrude's head was now resting on his shoulder. In his excitement he did not perceive that he was hugging her in a way that was exceedingly lover-like, nor did she seem to resent the proceeding.

"I tell you this now," he fiercely persisted, "so that you may understand—

"I only understand," she whispered, "that it is better for you to speak than for Sassulitch to act as your intercessor."

Her face was raised toward his now. Her beautiful eyes, tear-laden, it is true, were smiling at him in all confidence. A blush, such as was never evoked by the eager pleading of the Prince, irradiated her face and neck. Under such conditions, when the heart gallops, a man may be forgiven if he leaps barriers he deemed insurmountable in cold blood.

Frank gazed at her for a few seconds of tumultuous silence. "Ermytrude!" he cried, "can it be possible that you love me?"

"Had you asked me," she murmured, "I might have known it sooner."

\*

Thus it chanced that Natushka, whose personal troubles did not cause her to forget the claims of hospitality, entering the room on some housewifely errand saw them locked in each other's embrace, saw them exchange their first kiss.

She withdrew hastily. "Your mission prospers," she said bitterly to Sassulitch. "Within are two who will not flinch when the minister is called."

Sassulitch, not altogether surprised by this pleasant outcome of his planning, assured the big Ivan that one portion of their scheme must prove successful.

"Hurry with the *batushka* (parson) and get them wed!" was the gruff answer, and when the Russian astonished Ermytrude's father and brother with the announcement of her marriage, he spoke in all good faith, being certain that the ceremony had taken place two hours earlier.

This was not so. When their first transport of happiness had yielded to the anxieties of the hour, Frank told Ermytrude that even such a devoted